

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

Program Update September 2008

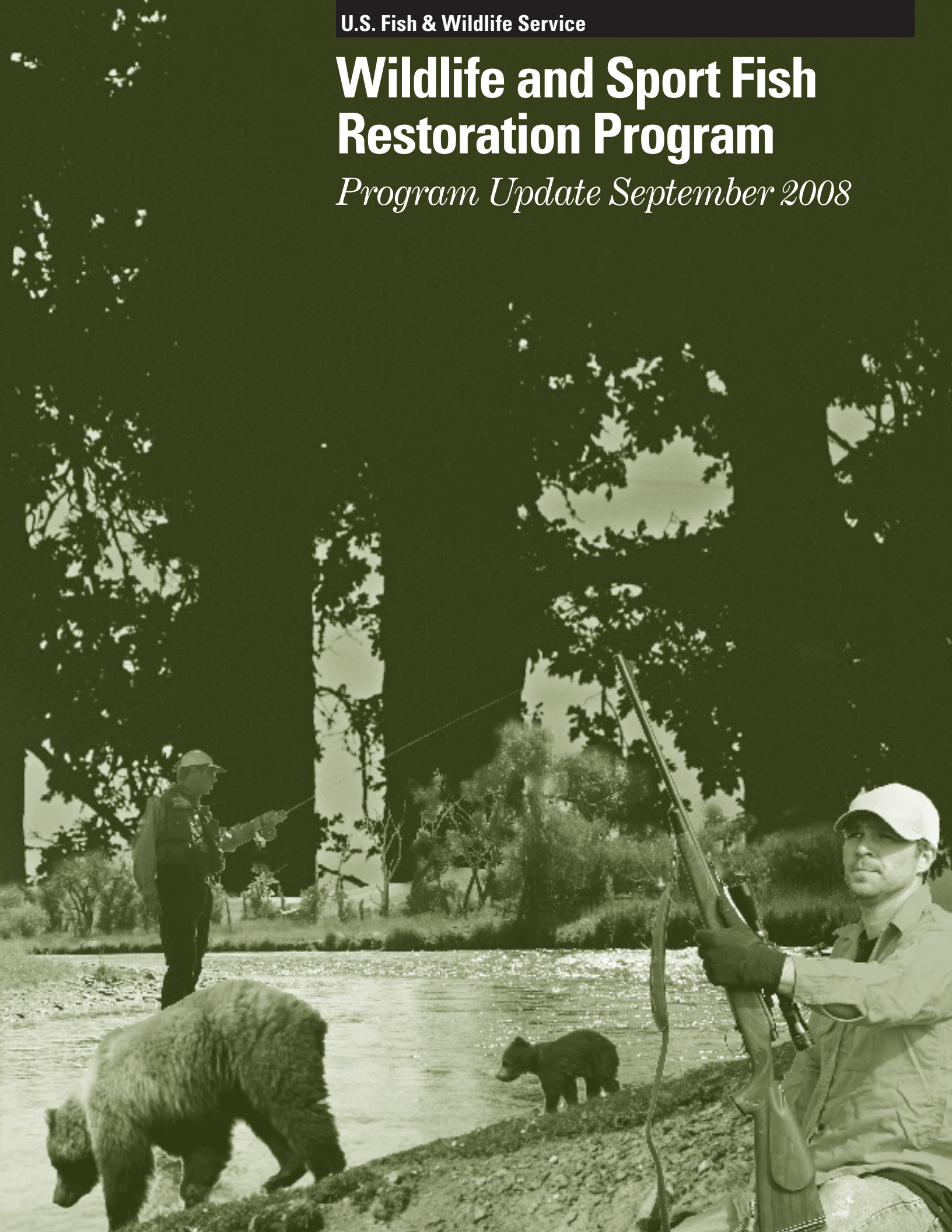




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Farewell and Hail:

H. Dale Hall, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, has announced that he will retire on January 3, 2009. We join the many others who are also in line to wish him well. Many in the States as well as the Service have worked side-by-side with Dale over the past 30+ years. Initially hired by the Service as a fisheries biologist in 1978, his journey to the Director's Office wound through the Lower Mississippi Valley, Houston, Portland, Washington, Atlanta, and Albuquerque. We in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) will especially miss his consistency and advocacy for the role hunters and anglers play in the nation's conservation.

Dale has provided vocal, strong support for the fishing and hunting community and conservation partnerships embodied in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. In an interview with *Field & Stream's* Kimberly Hiss shortly after being confirmed as Fish and Wildlife Service Director, he alluded to the pivotal role played by hunters and anglers in conservation, "...the most important thing that I'll want to do is to strengthen our roots in conservation. The Fish and Wildlife Service for over 130 years has been a conservation organization. And I really appreciate the hunters and fishermen of the United States as being staunch conservationists. We are where we are today because of them. They're the only group I've known to ask to be taxed so that they can contribute to natural resources. They started off asking for the duck stamp, then they asked for sport fish and wildlife restoration programs that now generate more than \$700 million a year."

Among his many noteworthy career achievements, Dale was the Service's first Regional Director to serve on the

Joint Federal/State Policy Task Force (JTF) when it was formed in September 2002. With Dale's contribution, the JTF quickly set about reinventing the close working relationship of the State and Federal Program partners after a particularly turbulent period. The initial meetings of the JTF were marked by fast and furious days while the members addressed the backlog of contentious, complex issues. His pragmatic approach and collaborative style set the stage for developing significant policy level solutions. He dug far enough into the grantsmanship weeds that he could confidently elaborate on nuances of loss of control vs. diversion. In fact, it can be said that by the time he was sworn in as the Director on October 12, 2005, Dale had a veritable doctorate in WSFR.

Dale's close relationship with the hunting and angling community and the collaborative partnerships he has fostered between the Service, States and Industry are a substantial legacy of his tenure as Director. His support will undoubtedly continue to be substantial as he sets retirement priorities and buys hunting and fishing licenses, adds to existing stocks of shotguns, fishing rods and bows.... maybe even a full tilt bass boat. Thanks, Dale.

And with that, the WSFR Program welcomes new Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Rowan Gould, moving from his role as Assistant Director for WSFR. Our advice as he takes on the mantle of Deputy Director is that there's no better cure for transition stress than a day spent outdoors with a fishing pole in hand. And, what better way to celebrate moving into an important new job than getting a new saltwater rig?



Photo by Joyce Johnson

Setting the Stage for the Next Century of Conservation

By Jodi Stemler

This fall, anyone who hunts or cares about wildlife and habitat conservation should take notice of a meeting that will chart the course for the future of our passions. Stemming from the August 2007 Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation Executive Order, the current generation of hunting and conservation leaders will be meeting with government decisionmakers to develop a long-term plan that will directly impact all of us.

It will be the first time since Theodore Roosevelt that a President has determined that wildlife conservation and our hunting heritage are important enough to bring together those that have a stake in these issues. The White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy will take the values and lessons learned from a century of conservation efforts to craft a strategy that will take us through at least the next decade.

Those of us involved in conservation know the history, but it is helpful to take a look back to put in perspective the importance of this current opportunity. In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt convened a broad group of leaders to address the issue of natural resource conservation. The meeting launched conservation to national attention and set the stage for the next generation of hunter conservationists. From Roosevelt's legacy came the likes of Aldo Leopold who led the charge to craft the American Game Policy in 1930 that solidified the importance of wildlife management and strengthened the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The Game Policy was updated only once in 1973 when a new North American Wildlife Policy adapted wildlife conservation goals to fit the new challenges that were facing wildlife management.

But while challenges continue to mount, a national direction and strategy for hunting and conservation has not been developed in more than thirty years. With urging from the Sporting Conservation Council, a Federal committee created to advise Federal agencies on conservation issues of interest to the hunting community, President Bush's Executive Order last year paved the way for a necessary update.

The overarching theme of this fall's conference will be the perpetuation and the strengthening of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Working groups made up of a broad group of interests have met to discuss the issues and develop real, attainable policy objectives to be included in the final 10-year plan. Along with general topics ranging from energy development to climate change, the issue of dependable funding for wildlife conservation will be a key subject.

Within the funding category, a variety of recommendations have been put on the table for potential inclusion. Included in this are proposals to broaden the classes of products subject to excise taxes (for instance capturing additional highway gas taxes on off highway vehicles) and ensuring that duties are added to all imported hunting and fishing products. The concept of increasing the Federal match amount for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs to 90 percent from 75 percent has been discussed.

Additionally, new funding mechanisms including dedicating a portion of climate change mitigation funds or income from oil and gas development to benefit for wildlife restoration are potential recommendations.

During the fall conference, the Administration, Members of Congress, Governors and the wildlife community will take a close look at all recommendations to determine their feasibility within the 10-year plan. The approach will be non-partisan to ensure that the decisions and policy directives made by these leaders will be successful no matter who is in the White House or controls Congress. It is a lofty goal, but if ever there was a time to expand commitments to conservation that we as an industry and community have done, this is it.

Jodi Stemler is a policy and communications consultant with more than a decade of experience working on fish and wildlife conservation issues. She has been contracted by the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, an ad hoc group of the nation's leading hunting conservation organizations, to help build awareness of the White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy.

Director Commits FWS to Strengthen Industry, Federal and State Agency Coalition

In conjunction with AFWA, Service Director Dale Hall recently announced his commitment of a senior staff position to oversee and coordinate the activities of the Industry, Federal, and State Agency Coalition and associated coordination teams. The Coalition has been instrumental with improving communication and coordination amongst the major stakeholders of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs. The Coalition's previous efforts include the Industry Summit held in December 2006 and 2007, which brought together State fish and wildlife agency directors, industry leaders and representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service together to discuss the longstanding Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs. The Coalition and its accompanying Steering Committee consists of leaders in the conservation and boating communities.

The Service staff position announced by Director Hall will be located within the AFWA office and is supervised by Matt Hogan, AFWA Executive Director. The position, however, remains a Federal position, and is part of the Service's Division of Program and Partnership Services, which is under the management authority of Beth Stevens - Assistant Director of External Affairs.

The Coalition is focusing their efforts and resources on five broad areas important to fish and wildlife conservation, as well as hunters and anglers including:

- **Outreach** - develop and implement a broad-based communication program that highlights the success and value of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, including the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, to various stakeholders and the general public
- **Partner communications** - ensure on-going, effective communication amongst industry, State fish and wildlife agencies, AFWA, and the Service
- **Funding challenges** - identify funding challenges facing fish and wildlife conservation and boating recreation, assess the feasibility of new funding options, and develop strategies to achieve new funding mechanisms or revamp current funding programs
- **Recruitment and retention** - help State agencies and other partners with ongoing recruitment/retention programs for hunters, anglers and boaters, develop best management practices and distribute these amongst program partners
- **Excise Tax** - maintain liaison with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program's Excise Tax Working Group and share accomplishments within the Steering Committee and relevant industry partners

In addition, the Coalition plans to host another Industry Summit in December 2008 to further engage industry with government conservation agencies. The Coalition's efforts will strengthen the partnerships that have been critical to the success of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program releases the Conservation Heritage Strategic Plan and the Conservation Heritage Measures

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (Program) was the subject of a Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Review conducted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2005. The results of that review were encouraging, but suggested that the Program needed a Strategic Plan and performance measures. To meet the requirements of the PART process, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association), representing State Fish and Wildlife agencies, and the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) agreed that both development of a Program Strategic Plan and performance measures should be completed through a joint State agency and Service endeavor. The Joint State/Federal Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF), working with a group of State agency and Service employees skilled in strategic planning and grant management, drafted two documents: the Conservation Heritage Strategic Plan and a performance reporting document, the Conservation Heritage Measures. The Conservation Heritage Strategic Plan was recently reviewed and approved by the Association and the Service. The Conservation Heritage Measures will likely be completed by December 2008.

The Conservation Heritage Strategic Plan is a broad, overarching document that describes core values, mission, vision, and intended outcomes for the Program. The information contained in the Conservation Heritage Measures builds off the Strategic Plan and will include: operating principles that are grounded in the Program's core values and support the effective and efficient administration of the Program by State agencies and the Service; examples of actions that will be taken to achieve the mission, vision, and intended outcomes described in the Strategic Plan; and, measures that will document Program performance in two areas outlined in the Strategic Plan: (1) Fish and Wildlife Conservation and (2) Program Administration.

The Conservation Heritage Strategic Plan is available publically through the WSFR website and in hard copy (send an email to webmaster_wsfrprograms@fws.gov to request a copy). The Program plans to implement the Strategic Plan starting in FY 2009.

The State agency and Service employees on the writing team and/or the JTF include:

- **Gary Armstrong**, Federal Assistance and Planning Supervisor, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
- **Carol Bambery**, Counsel, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- **Tom Barnes**, Chief, Policy Branch, WSFR Program, USFWS
- **Gerry Barnhardt**, formerly Director, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- **Steve Barton**, Chief, Division of Administration and Information Management, WSFR Program, USFWS
- **Mark Burch**, Planner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- **Melba Davidson**, formerly Funds Planning Manager/Federal Aid Coordinator, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- **Vaughn Douglas**, Program Chief, Lands & Development, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 5
- **Ken Elowe**, Director, Bureau of Resource Management, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- **Lisa Evans**, Assistant Director, Sport Fish Division, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- **John Frampton**, Director, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- **Rowan Gould**, Assistant Director, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 9
- **Jim Greer**, formerly Chief, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 9
- **Kelly Hepler**, formerly Director, Sport Fish Division, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- **Joyce Johnson**, Chief, Division of Policy and Programs, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 9
- **Philip A. King**, Federal Aid Coordinator, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife

- **Christy Kuczak**, Grant Management Specialist, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 9
- **Chris McKay**, Assistant Regional Director, Migratory Birds & State Programs, USFWS, Region 1
- **Larry Mellinger**, Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Interior
- **Harold E. Namminga**, Fisheries Program Manager, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 2
- **Tom Niebauer**, Federal Policy Advisor, Wisconsin DNR
- **Arthur (Art) J. Newell**, Chief, Bureau of Fish & Wildlife Services, Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- **John Organ**, Chief, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 5
- **Jennifer Pratt-Miles**, Mediator, Meridian Institute
- **Glen Salmon**, Director, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
- **Keith Sexson**, Assistant Secretary for Operations, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
- **Ray Temple**, Fishery Biologist, WSFR Program, USFWS, Region 1
- **Robyn Thorson**, Regional Director, Midwest Region, USFWS
- **Jay West**, formerly Mediator, Meridian Institute



Bill Hutchinson, Idaho Sport Fish Restoration Program Coordinator since 1996, was recognized by the Portland Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program staff at a brief ceremony at the Idaho Fish and Game Commission's regular summer meeting in Post Falls in July. Jerry Novotny, Portland staff, noted that over \$50 million grant dollars had been assigned for fish research and development projects throughout the state under Hutchinson's signature. Bill Hutchinson (left), Idaho Fish & Game, Jerry Novotny, (center) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program/Portland, and Commissioner Wayne Wright (right) from Magic Valley Region. Photo by Doug Schleis, "Wild Idaho News".

The Joint Task Force — Getting Beyond Federal vs. State

It's been almost six years since the grant world witnessed the beginning of a bold new approach to problem solving. The President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jointly chartered a team to tackle national issues in a cooperative rather than adversarial manner. Their vision was that State and Federal team members from various levels of authority would reason together as equals. Team members would base their recommendations on what worked best for the resource instead of what worked best for turf or career. The requirements of law, the opinions of legal experts, and the experience of grant professionals would prevail over personal preferences and organizational cultures in shaping the team's recommendations.

This team, of course, was the Joint Federal/State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy. It was born at the end of a turbulent period in the Pittman-Robertson Dingell-Johnson programs, a period marked by suspicion, distrust, and congressional intervention. The challenges were daunting and expectations were high. The Joint Task Force successfully dealt with those challenges and met the high expectations. It resolved most long-standing problems, and ended the mutual distrust. In short, it accomplished a lot.

The Joint Task Force's recommendations have resulted in 10 new Service Manual chapters, the revision of many other chapters, and seven policy guidance memorandums. These recommendations have affected seven grant programs directly and seven other grant programs indirectly.

The most significant issue that the Joint Task Force addressed during the past year was the need to clarify the process for certifying paid license holders. This issue arose because some States have been offering hunters and anglers new licensing options, applying different criteria for counting license holders under these options, and using different time frames for the license certification year. The Service apportions funds to States in the two largest grant programs based in part on the number of license holders, so consistent approaches are vital to a fair distribution.

The Joint Task Force reviewed an early draft clarification of the regulations on license certification on February 11. The Service then published a proposed rule to revise these regulations on May 5. The Service received comments from 27 State fish and wildlife agencies, 3 comments from individuals, and comments from AFWA and another nonprofit organization. The Service modified the rule based on these comments.

The most significant clarifications in the final rule are:

- The State may count persons possessing a single-year license only in the State-specified license certification period in which the license was purchased.
- The State may count only those persons who possess a license that produced net revenue of at least \$1 per year.
- State-specified license certification periods must be consistent from year to year and end 1-2 years before the beginning of the Federal fiscal year during which apportioned funds will become available.

Another important Joint Task Force issue this past year focused on cooperative farming. State fish and wildlife agencies often enter into agreements with farmers to grow crops on lands purchased or operated with grant funds. Typically farmers harvest part of the crops and leave part for wildlife. Some auditors have interpreted the harvested crops as program income. This interpretation can have consequences under certain conditions because Federal regulations and Service policy govern the use of program income. The Joint Task Force addressed the issue by recommending an amendment of the Service Manual chapter on program income clarifying that crops harvested to serve wildlife purposes under cooperative farming agreements are not program income. The Service Director accepted this recommendation and amended the chapter.

Outreach was another focus of the Joint Task Force over the past two years. During two "Industry Summits" it became clear that many partners did not have a good understanding of what happened to the excise tax revenue collected from the sale of hunting and fishing gear. The Joint Task Force asked its members to contribute information, images, and expertise for use in a video to let industry partners know

what the excise tax revenues have accomplished. Attendees at the AFWA annual conference in September will have an opportunity to see this video.

Strategic Planning for the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program was the focus of most of the Joint Task Force's attention during the past year. Another Program Update article will describe this effort in detail.

The Joint Task Force will continue to take on emerging issues in the grant programs under its purview. These include Wildlife Restoration, Sport Fish Restoration, Hunter Education and Safety, Boating Infrastructure Grants, Clean Vessel Act, State Wildlife Grants, and the Landowner Incentive Program.

Glen Salmon and Rowan Gould serve as Joint Task Force cochairs. Other members are John Frampton, AFWA's legal counsel Carol Bambery, Steve Barton, Ken Elowe, Lisa Evans, Kelly Hepler, Joyce Johnson, Chris McKay, the Service's legal counsel Larry Mellinger, Tom Niebauer, John Organ, Keith Sexson, Robyn Thorson, and Tom Barnes. AFWA's Christina Zarrella and the Service's Kim Galvan serve as staff. Joint Task Force members welcome requests from State fish and wildlife agencies and the Service's regional chiefs to address inconsistent interpretations or implementation of laws, regulations, and policies. Suggestions on streamlining grant programs are also welcome.



The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Lake Record Fish Program, which will recognize anglers who catch a fish that qualifies as a record setter for the reservoir in which it was caught, was established in 2008 with a Sport Fish Restoration grant. Arbuckle Lake angler Allen Gifford with a 14.8 pound largemouth bass for a new lake record. Photo by wildlifedepartment.com

Fishing License Sales Expected to Increase Nationally

State funds for management and conservation could receive a big boost this year, due to the concerted efforts of the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and 30 state fish and wildlife agencies. Building upon previous success with the organization's pilot state efforts, including a direct mail campaign with the Minnesota DNR that garnered a 20.3 percent response rate and supported the sale of nearly 10,000 fishing licenses, RBFF created a nationwide recruitment and retention program to reach out to lapsed anglers.

By targeting lapsed anglers and encouraging them to renew their fishing licenses, the program generates awareness of the connection between fishing license sales and conservation efforts. RBFF's Direct Mail Marketing Program—the first nationwide marketing effort of this kind — recognizes that conservation dollars rely heavily on participation.

States interested in participating met certain criteria including an electronic license database, at least one year of lapsed angler data, state funds and a year commitment to the program. In December 2007, a Direct Mail Marketing Kit that included step-by-step instructions for planning and executing a license renewal campaign, direct mail templates, marketing strategies and state agency case studies, was finalized and distributed to the 30 participating states.

In March 2008, state agencies began mailing postcards, letters and self-mailers to more than 1 million lapsed anglers across the country. RBFF purchased local radio and online advertising to support the state programs. Participating states also received a public relations toolkit from RBFF to help them communicate about the program to internal and external audiences, and to promote their efforts locally.

The program strongly encourages agencies to use incentives or special offers in their direct mail to anglers. Many have done so, offering free magazine subscriptions, park admission and boat rentals.

With 30 states on board, the program could generate significant additional funds for conservation, management programs and preservation of our waterways. Evaluations for many of the participating states will be available in October 2008. RBFF intends on building on the momentum of this past year to gain commitment from ten new states to implement the program in 2009.

For additional information on this effort, please contact Frank Peterson, RBFF President & CEO (FPeterson@rbff.org) or Stephanie Hussey, RBFF Director of State Initiatives (SHussey@rbff.org).

Innovative Kansas Program Removes Fishing License Barriers and Promotes Family Fishing

State fish and wildlife agencies continue to develop innovative uses of the Sport Fish Restoration program funds to address the issues facing anglers and industry today. One agency, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, has begun using program funds to address a barrier facing many anglers today, increased license fees and confusing license requirements.

Small community fishing lakes provide Kansas anglers some of the state's best fishing opportunities. Many of these lakes are renowned statewide for their excellent largemouth bass, channel catfish and crappie fisheries. However, many communities required anglers to purchase additional fishing licenses to fish on these municipally-owned waters. While this provided a funding source for the municipalities, it created an additional license requirement for anglers. This was problematic for several reasons, including creating confusion with anglers as to whether they had purchased all of the required licenses and also causing additional financial burden due to the increased license fees.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) recognized this burden on anglers and the fishing opportunities afforded by these community lakes and took action using Sport Fish Restoration program funds. Specifically, the Kansas agency created the Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) in 2004 and began using Sport Fish Restoration program funds to lease the fishing rights from the communities. KDWP requires that the local communities eliminate their local fishing license requirements in order to participate in CFAP. In addition, the community is expected to maintain the lake's facilities (e.g. mowing, maintaining roads) and cannot charge anglers other fees to generate additional revenue (e.g., boat ramp launch fees, if they exist, must be waived for anglers).

To date, more than 15,000 acres of lakes and ponds have been made available to Kansas anglers, and 110 Kansas communities or counties participate in the CFAP program. KDWP has spent more than \$2.2 million of Sport Fish Restoration funds to lease these fishing rights and provide angler access. In turn, Kansas communities have provided more than \$4.3 million in matching in-kind contributions for lake maintenance and other activities.

KDWP has also developed innovative criteria that incorporates findings of human dimensions research to determine how much the agency will pay for the fishing leases. Human dimensions research has repeatedly identified that many recreationists prefer additional lighting for safety reasons and also more modern conveniences such as flush toilets. Accordingly, KDWP pays more for fishing leases on lakes which have these amenities provided. In addition, KDWP has identified these lakes as "family friendly" in their popular Fishing Atlas. As a result, many communities are seeking grants to put in these important facilities so that their lake can be categorized as "family friendly."

The experience of the Kansas agency to date has indicated this is a win-win situation for everyone involved. Anglers have had a barrier affecting their participation removed, the communities have received funding to assist with the expenses for providing the fishing access, and the Kansas agency has benefitted from more happy anglers. A recent survey of the community governments found that 75 percent of these cooperators believe that their lakes are experiencing an increase in anglers!

Sport Fish Restoration Program Funding Hits All Time High

State grant funding from the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration program reached an all-time high of \$398 million in fiscal year 2008. The Service announced the final apportionments to the States in February. The record funding levels are primarily the result of increased revenue from fuels taxes into the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The recovery of additional fuels taxes was authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was signed into law in August 2005.

Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council to Review Boating Access

In other program news, the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council has begun its review of the boating access program. The Council's review is expected to last approximately 1 year and will review the effectiveness of the Service's administration of this part of the Sport Fish Restoration program, as well as other issues. The Council's review will seek to ensure that the needs of the boaters are being addressed through these grant funds. Currently, States (on a regional basis) must expend 15 percent of their total apportionment from the Sport Fish Restoration program on boating access activities. With the overall Sport Fish Restoration grant program apportionment approaching \$400 million dollars, this equates to almost \$60 million for boating access grants.

The Council will have reviewed all of the boating-related activities and grant programs funded through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund when this review is completed. The Council's Boating Committee, led by John Sprague, will conduct the review.

Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Completes Review of Clean Vessel Act Grant Program

The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council has completed their review of the Clean Vessel Act grant program. The Council found that the program has done a good job in meeting its intended purpose. The Council did not recommend any major changes in the Service's administration of the program or the current program direction. The report did, however, offer 30 recommendations for improving the program's accountability and performance.

The Council's report identified some notable program accomplishments. Almost \$150 million of grant funds has been awarded to States since the inception of the grant program in the early 1990s. Of this total, approximately 76 percent was awarded for coastal projects. Forty-eight states and all of the territories have received funding from the program.

The report's findings and recommendations were presented to the Service earlier this year and the final report with case studies and other references will be published. Copies of the report will be available for downloading from the Program's web site (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/>) in the future.

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCG) was established by Title III of PL. 101-646, Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act of 1990. NCWCG provides competitive funding to coastal States for long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. The administration of the NCWCG is shared between the Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program (FHC) and WSFR. Program staff have been working to improve the NCWCG through providing clarifying information to eligible applicants and partners, revising the program regulations (50 CFR 84) and application ranking criteria, and altering the National Review Committee meeting locations.

The National Review Meeting is a meeting where Regional Service representatives from FHC and/or WSFR appointed annually by the Regional Directors review and score the eligible grant applications and recommend projects for awards to the Director. Until last year, the National Review Meetings were held in Arlington, Virginia. In order to defray travel costs and to encourage learning about regional differences between coastal wetland ecosystems, the meeting locations will rotate for the next several years to different Regions. In October 2008, the meeting was hosted by Region 3 in De Pere, Wisconsin. After the panel reviewed and scored the applications, the panel was invited to visit projects supported by past NCWCG funding on Wisconsin's Door Peninsula. It was informative and exciting to see some of the positive impacts of the NCWCG on-the-ground. The FY 2009 National Review Meeting will be held October 21-23, 2008 in Port Townsend, Washington. The meeting will be hosted by Region 1.

The FY 2009 awards will be announced in December 2008 or January 2009. Applicants will be notified by the Regional WSFR Office, and there will be a Service press release notifying the public of the awards. It is expected that approximately \$19 million will be available for FY 2009 awards. The maximum award amount per project is \$1 million, and cost-share requirements generally allow for a 75 percent Federal share. Please see the program regulations in 50 CFR 84 for more specific program information.

The FY 2010 Request for Applications (RFA) will be posted on grants.gov (CFDA 15.614) in February 2009. The FY 2008 and 2009 RFAs included a "Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions" that was well received by the National Review Committee and eligible applicants. This will be revised as appropriate and included in the FY 2010 RFA.

The NCWCG program regulations (50 CFR 84) are being revised. Although there is a committed team working on the revision, the changes will probably not be in place until the FY 2011 funding cycle. There will be an opportunity to comment on draft revisions in the next few months through a formal Federal Register notice.

The importance of coastal wetlands and their role in maintaining water quality, protecting against erosion and flood damage, and contributing to biodiversity have been gaining attention in the news. The NCWCG has restored, enhanced, and protected approximately 65,000 acres of coastal wetland ecosystems in the last five years of the program. This information was been provided to support the President's Earth Day 2008 report.

Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Multistate Conservation Grants are awarded cooperatively with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). These grants support products and solve high priority problems affecting States on a regional or national basis and allow for efficient use of limited resources to address the national conservation needs of States established through the AFWA. The Program has awarded over 125 grants since 2001 to States, groups of States, and non-governmental organizations including universities throughout the United States. Examples below highlight the broad array of projects supported by Multistate Conservation grants. The following projects were completed in 2007. To learn more about all projects funded and the benefits derived from the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, please visit <http://faims.fws.gov>.

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) -This grant addressed the National Conservation Need that supports actions of a National Fish Habitat Initiative. The primary objective of this project was to develop a range-wide management strategy for Eastern brook trout the only true native trout species in the Northeast. Eastern brook trout are important cold water game fish and indicator species of clean water. A population classification system was developed that compared data from over 8,000 watersheds in the northeast. A data access system was developed and the final data set is available on EBTJV's home Web site, www.easternbrooktrout.org. Additional data layers of identified variables impacting brook trout distribution were also included. Analysis of the data provided information on what watersheds were most suitable for restoration, enhancement and protection. A multi-agency conservation management strategy was developed. Comprehensive outreach plans to engage, inform, and inspire the public and decision makers were developed, and implemented. Trout Unlimited a subcontractor for the project implemented a media campaign and featured fact sheets and maps for each of the 14 individual states who participated in the study on their Web site www.brookie.org.

The EBTJV is the nation's first pilot project under the National Fish Habitat Initiative, which directs locally-driven efforts that build private and public partnerships to improve fish habitat. This project served as a model for other regional initiatives within the National Fish Habitat Initiative (www.fishhabitat.org)

The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports; Research Strategies to Increase Participation and Retention -This grant addressed the National Conservation Need that supported projects that proposed to develop and continue programs that support recruitment and participation in outdoor recreation. This grant identified specific program elements and effective program messages for encouraging new and continued participation in the hunting and shooting sports. The research was presented and its implications discussed at the Shooting Sports Summit sponsored by the National Shooting Sports Foundation in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in June 2008. This study represents one of the largest and most comprehensive studies ever conducted on the factors related to hunting and sport shooting participation.

Economic Impacts of Sportfishing, 2006 - This grant addressed the National Conservation Need to support recruitment and participation in outdoor recreation that financially secure and sustain the North American hunting, fishing, and trapping heritage.

The objective of this project was to quantify the economic impacts of sportfishing nationally and by state. This grant compiled and analyzed expenditure data from the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Grant results produced a number of 2006 fishing facts. There were about 30 million anglers over the age of 16. Nearly 40 million anglers, including youth ages 6-15. Retail expenditures were \$45.3 billion. Because this money was spent and re-spent by businesses, employees, suppliers and others, these expenditures had an overall ripple effect of about \$125 billion. Over one million jobs were supported. Fishing generated about \$16.4 billion in State and Federal taxes. With these results, State agencies can now communicate the economic aspects of sportfishing and the economic importance of fisheries resources. The results will help agencies understand the potential positive and negative effects that changes to fisheries may have on local, State, and national economies. Copies of the report are available from the American Sportfishing Association's website www.asafishing.org.



State Wildlife Grant Program

The State Wildlife Grant Program continued in Fiscal Year 2008 with the total amount of apportioned funding for the States, Tribes, and territories at \$61.5 million, up slightly over the 2007 apportionment of \$60.8 million. These grant funds are now being used primarily for implementation of projects which conserve or recover “species of greatest conservation need” as described in each State or territorial Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan.

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget also included approximately \$5,000,000 for a competitive program for States and territories. This competitive program will encourage cooperative projects among the States and other public and private partners including private landowners.

The criteria for this new competitive program is available on the Grants.gov website. The deadline for submissions of FY08 and FY09 proposals (subject to available funds) is November 17, 2008.

Public Access Civil Rights Program

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) enforces Federal civil rights laws and regulations, on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in the administration of their programs to the public. The public access civil rights program is responsible for key civil rights laws such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and a host of other laws, regulations and Presidential Executive Orders.

WSFR Training Program

The National WSFR Training Program, located at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, is part of the WSFR Program Information Management Branch. The training program develops and delivers grants management training for Program staff and State fish and wildlife agency grantees. These training courses increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of State and Federal personnel who manage WSFR Program grants. This training helps to ensure that grant managers consistently apply the laws, rules, and policies that govern the administration of WSFR Program grants.

Training opportunities are provided through classroom courses, workshops, and on-line E-learning activities. Courses currently available include: Basic Grants Management, Project Leaders Course, Federal Assistance Toolkit Introduction & Navigation (e-learning), Introduction to Federal Assistance Grant Programs & Processes (e-learning), and the Advanced Grants Management Course.

Course descriptions, scheduling information, training materials, grant manager's resources, and links to the DOI Learn course catalog and on-line course application are available on the WSFR Program Web site at: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/Training/TrainingNews.html>.

For additional information contact Steve Leggans at the National Conservation Training Center at 304-876-7927.

WSFR Website

In December 2007 a new Web site for the WSFR Program, Washington, D.C. Office, was unveiled. The new Web site reflects the recent name change of the organization from Federal Assistance Division to Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Changes to the Web site include implementation of standard page templates, information organized around program/topic specific menu options, and in context hyperlinks. These changes help visitors more easily navigate and find information on the site. Another major improvement included incorporating a site-specific search appliance to help Web users quickly find information even if they are not familiar with the way information is organized on the site.

Many users visit the site looking for information about WSFR grant programs, current funding opportunities, program accomplishments, funding history, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, grant program training, and news and announcements about WSFR grant programs.

Visit the WSFR Program Web site at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/home.html>.

Contact the WSFR Program Web master via e-mail at webmaster_wsfrprograms@fws.gov for additional information about the WSFR Program web site or call Steve Leggans at 304-876-7927.

Wildlife Restoration Apportionments to States

Total Apportionments for Wildlife Restoration Program (1939-2008)

Alabama	\$100,477,657
Alaska	\$236,263,845
American Samoa	\$7,003,959
Arizona	\$129,492,887
Arkansas	\$98,065,733
California	\$205,919,860
Colorado	\$140,894,573
Connecticut	\$40,398,223
Delaware	\$32,516,451
District of Columbia	\$0
Florida	\$99,950,584
Georgia	\$120,920,650
Guam	\$8,516,737
Hawaii	\$32,129,892
Idaho	\$105,255,721
Illinois	\$120,392,611
Indiana	\$103,091,420
Iowa	\$97,672,923
Kansas	\$100,807,714
Kentucky	\$94,467,228
Louisiana	\$100,553,525
Maine	\$63,407,393
Maryland	\$54,422,953
Massachusetts	\$51,070,754
Michigan	\$208,387,722
Minnesota	\$162,243,879
Mississippi	\$87,165,094
Missouri	\$148,514,501
Montana	\$153,100,168
Nebraska	\$92,139,987
Nevada	\$98,912,677
New Hampshire	\$32,654,948
New Jersey	\$52,801,285
New Mexico	\$115,933,959
New York	\$168,248,386
North Carolina	\$121,757,624
North Dakota	\$77,513,126
N Mariana Islands	\$7,439,325
Ohio	\$131,616,113
Oklahoma	\$109,086,923
Oregon	\$133,366,388
Pennsylvania	\$221,741,190
Puerto Rico	\$22,178,945
Rhode Island	\$32,490,129
South Carolina	\$70,910,944
South Dakota	\$93,316,978
Tennessee	\$144,599,732
Texas	\$261,655,153
U.S. Virgin Islands	\$8,631,916
Utah	\$100,219,399
Vermont	\$33,226,054
Virginia	\$111,483,230
Washington	\$114,742,784
West Virginia	\$67,695,178
Wisconsin	\$171,686,258
Wyoming	\$102,973,498
TOTAL	\$5,602,126,786

Sport Fish Restoration Apportionments to States

Total Apportionments for Sportfish Restoration Program (1952-2008)

Alabama	\$89,325,393
Alaska	\$288,375,801
American Samoa	\$19,087,771
Arizona	\$119,948,947
Arkansas	\$103,989,573
California	\$289,400,378
Colorado	\$142,903,215
Connecticut	\$57,880,078
Delaware	\$57,880,078
District of Columbia	\$17,856,755
Florida	\$152,256,667
Georgia	\$112,029,423
Guam	\$19,436,904
Hawaii	\$57,794,483
Idaho	\$98,183,406
Illinois	\$121,383,280
Indiana	\$88,237,098
Iowa	\$81,280,658
Kansas	\$85,258,395
Kentucky	\$89,939,059
Louisiana	\$95,966,286
Maine	\$57,914,408
Maryland	\$60,198,147
Massachusetts	\$57,880,078
Michigan	\$206,378,184
Minnesota	\$217,048,092
Mississippi	\$75,246,091
Missouri	\$144,097,442
Montana	\$134,964,336
Nebraska	\$21,743,019
Nevada	\$74,702,335
New Hampshire	\$85,827,483
New Jersey	\$57,880,078
New Mexico	\$60,962,835
New York	\$106,371,214
North Carolina	\$143,975,964
North Dakota	\$93,080,851
N Mariana Islands	\$58,580,875
Ohio	\$141,486,199
Oklahoma	\$111,520,186
Oregon	\$136,733,211
Pennsylvania	\$145,369,199
Puerto Rico	\$56,198,183
Rhode Island	\$57,880,078
South Carolina	\$70,734,435
South Dakota	\$71,538,309
Tennessee	\$124,598,572
Texas	\$289,233,339
U.S. Virgin Islands	\$19,078,571
Utah	\$100,157,561
Vermont	\$57,880,078
Virginia	\$91,231,599
Washington	\$127,211,165
West Virginia	\$57,894,872
Wisconsin	\$194,071,705
Wyoming	\$91,175,281
TOTAL	\$5,789,257,623

A black and white composite image. In the upper left, a fisherman in a plaid shirt and cap crouches to hold a large fish. In the upper right, a hunter in a cap is silhouetted against a bright sun, holding a rifle. In the lower left, a duck is visible. In the lower right, two mountain goats with large horns are shown, one standing and one lying down. The background consists of tall, thin reeds or grasses.

Regional Program Highlights

Highlights from Region 1

Wildlife Restoration Program



Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Funds provide guidance to protect wildlife resources. Photo by Ray Temple, USFWS.

In the realm of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, technical guidance grants largely go unnoticed among habitat restoration, surveys, reintroductions, and other projects that are readily visible on the ground. Running in the background of all these efforts are three technical guidance grants that collectively fund much of the states' defense of fish and wildlife habitats from the growth and sprawl of human population and increased demand for goods and services that have ramped up in the last several decades. Fish and wildlife agencies typically have limited authorities for habitat protection, but may have considerable influence on State and Federal regulatory agencies that can actively protect habitats. However, that influence is contingent on hard scientific data, credible analyses, and sound technical understanding of factors affecting habitat use and the consequences to fish and wildlife. Project reviews, environmental documents, permits, interagency work group meetings, and other activities collectively run into the thousands each year. Each agency approaches the use of grant funds somewhat differently, but in all cases staff biologists develop protective policies, evaluate risks, work to avoid or minimize impacts, and actively raise awareness among agencies, project proponents, and the public as to the importance of fish and wildlife and ways to meet societal needs while protecting the needs of fish and wildlife.

Hunter Education



Hunter Education in the Northwest goes high tech! Photo by Tony Faast, USFWS.

Over half the States in the Nation now have an on-line option for students requiring a State Hunter Education course; all of the Northwest states have fully-functional on-line courses. The option allows students to take a Hunter Education course via computer, and accompanied with a “hands-on” field day that complements their on-line course work, students can now learn and progress at their own pace on their way to becoming safe and responsible hunters. The computer training is a recent, and popular addition to many Hunter Education Programs, and the number of students has grown exponentially since the first Web-based programs became available in 2004. Wildlife Restoration funds derived from excise taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, support these training programs for new hunters, and provide funding for shooting ranges and hunter education course enhancements.

Sport Fish Restoration



Boat facility dedication an excellent example of the payoff of good partnerships. Photo by Jerry Novotny, USFWS.

Dedications of new boating facilities are great opportunities to compliment the various funding and responsible entities for construction of needed boating facilities. Oregon has an excellent model of involving local groups and extended state and federal agencies in upgrading and siting new facilities. Calkins Park, located on Foster Reservoir, Linn County, Oregon, was an excellent example of such a partnership. Sport Fish Restoration Program, boating access funds, (\$200,000) were used to partially fund the project. Working through several years of permitting and design necessities, involved in present-day construction activities, requires patience and cooperation. The pay off is the appreciation the public has for new, safe, and accessible facilities. Foster Reservoir is a very popular, and busy destination - fishing for trout and warm-water species accounts for more than half of the total visits to the reservoir. The Corps of Engineers, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Marine Board, Linn County Parks, and the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program all collaborated in the siting of this new, and already busy, facility in Oregon.

Coastal Wetlands



Working with our partners to develop competitive Coastal Wetlands Program proposals. Photo by Nell Fuller, USFWS.

This year, coastal states within Region One submitted a total of 13 proposals for the Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program. For all but 2 of the proposals (those from HI), WSFRP staff participated in site visits to provide applicants with site-specific advice regarding how to address each of the required criteria. State and other partners have unanimously voiced support for these site visits in the past, and we have made special efforts to meet with them to ensure that they have addressed important ranking criteria in their applications. A representative from The Nature Conservancy summarized, "It was incredibly helpful to have you share your advice and knowledge with us on site."

Following proposal submission, WSFRP convenes a Regional Review Team, comprised of representatives from several FWS programs (Coastal, Endangered Species, Migratory Birds, Fisheries, WSFRP, and the Pacific Coast Joint Venture) to rank the proposals. The Team reviews each grant application and provides scores and suggestions for improvements, with follow-up calls to ensure comments were clear. These site and proposal reviews prior to submission of the application give FWS personnel a unique opportunity to provide comprehensive technical advice to our partners in the development of their proposals.

Landowner Incentive Program

A Landowner Incentive Program grant was provided to purchase a 70-acre easement of a remnant Palouse Prairie to further study the species and to preserve their habitat in the western Idaho.

Research being completed by University of Idaho soil scientist Jodi Johnson-Maynard, an associate professor in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, may confirm the discovery of giant earthworms in the Pacific Northwest. Some reports indicate the worms can reach 3-feet long. The discovery of the newest specimen occurred on the property of Wayne and Jacie Jensen south of Moscow, Idaho as agricultural and life sciences researchers were collaborating on an invasive weed study to protect prairie remnants. "It was no surprise to us that they found the worm there," landowner Jacie Jensen said. "It's an intact, functioning ecosystem of Palouse plants so the worm was where it should be."



Native earthworm science may be advanced with discovery of two new specimens of giant earthworms from opposite sides of the interior Columbia River basin. Photo by Barbara Behan, USFWS.

Region 1

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Highlights from Region 2

Wildlife Restoration

In late 2006, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was notified by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) staff of a potential conservation opportunity in the Southern High Plains. The focus was protection of lesser prairie-chickens (LPC) and the grasslands upon which they depend. By late January of 2007, efforts were initiated to protect approximately 6,000 acres of high quality LPC habitat in Yoakum and Terry Counties. Each conservation partner needed to overcome internal challenges inherent within both institutions. At the time, TNC had a large internal land debt, and while TNC staff recognized the significance of this project, starting new initiatives while under this crushing debt was challenging. Within TPWD, it was determined that preserving LPC habitat represented a high priority in relation to the Texas Wildlife Action Plan. After several on-site visits by key staff, and following expanding the base of support for the project from biological staff to TPWD commissioners, a breakthrough developed. TPWD agreed to commit 75 percent of project costs via Wildlife Restoration funding, while TNC agreed to carry out real estate negotiations, enter into a contract for the property, hold fee title to the property after closing, and raise the remaining 25 percent of the funds needed to make the project happen. The property formerly known as the Fitzgerald Ranch is now under permanent conservation protection, with TNC and TPWD acting in partnership to co-manage the land as native prairie habitat. An additional 2,500 acres is under consideration and may soon be added to the project. Conservation of properties with high wildlife value should be replicated across the state in order to support successful implementation of the Texas Wildlife Action Plan.



Sand dunes and bluestem grasses at Fitzgerald Ranch Photo by H. Whitlaw.

Wildlife Restoration

Arizona Game and Fish Department Success Story — State Route 260 Wildlife-Highway Research

Since 2001, the Department has conducted research along a 17-mile stretch of State Route 260 where the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has incorporated seven sets of wildlife underpasses and 6 bridges to promote passage by animals across the upgraded highway corridor. Over 110 elk have been fitted with GPS collars to determine crossing patterns and assess the ability of elk to cross the highway (or permeability). This data was used under adaptive management to strategically fence the highway corridor to funnel elk toward the underpasses, where research has shown traffic has no affect on passage (thus explaining why they work). As a result, elk-vehicle collisions were reduced on a five mile highway section by 85 percent while elk permeability was improved 50 percent, making the upgraded highway better for motorists and animals alike (and realizing nearly \$1 million per year in benefit from reduced accidents along the 17 miles). On another three mile section that was fenced and includes the State's first electric wildlife crosswalk, the elk-vehicle collision rate has been reduced over 95 percent. Similar research is now underway on five other highways in northern Arizona involving an array of wildlife species.



Sport Fish Restoration

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, with partial funding from the Sport Fish Restoration Act, recently completed the State's first warm water fish hatchery. The hatchery is located in Santa Rosa, NM, and consists of 11 one-acre ponds, a new settling pond, and all the requisite piping. The new facility shares the water source for the existing trout rearing station. Largemouth bass were the first fish cultured in the new system. Catfish are now being raised in the ponds and next year the Department will rear walleye, largemouth bass, catfish, and bluegill.

Coastal Wetlands

The North Deer Island Project

North Deer Island features some of the most spectacular bird watching opportunities for the endangered brown pelican and threatened Reddish Egret and White-faced Ibis.

The most productive bird nesting island on the Texas Coast, it is also one of the few natural islands in West Bay, Galveston Bay. The island is made up of 25 acres of upland rookery habitat and 129 acres of estuarine marsh. The island is currently threatened by shoreline erosion that has been occurring at rates measured up to 20 feet per year.

This island sanctuary provides outstanding habitat for a tremendous number and diversity of birds and receives international attention during bird migrations. Owned by the Houston Audubon Society, the island also provides critical habitat for recreationally and commercially important fish and shellfish species.

Up to 30,000 bird nesting pairs use the 144-acre island year round, especially during nesting season from May to August.

Billions of dollars are generated across the U.S. from the commercial and recreational opportunities wildlife viewing provides according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Web site.

Project Accomplishments

- Protected the entire 144-acre island from destruction due to erosion, in two phases.
- Employed innovative, cost saving techniques.
- Placed 24,100 tons of limestone to create 1.7 miles of durable erosion control structures.
- Protected habitats include upland nesting areas, wetlands, tidal flats and lagoons.
- Created 8 acres of intertidal marsh islands.
- 40 Volunteers planted smooth cordgrass during Marsh Mania, one of the nation's most successful volunteer wetland restoration programs.
- Project cost leveraged \$3.2 million, funded through local contributions as well as Federal and State conservation grant programs
- This project is a key component to the West Bay Conservation Corridor, where project partners involved have preserved 5,000 acres of coastal habitat and restored or enhanced over 900 acres of coastal wetlands.

Galveston Bay lost nearly 35,000 acres of critical wetland habitat between 1950 and 1980. Conservation partners are working diligently to restore these lost wetlands. The protection of North Deer Island is one of several nationally recognized collaborative efforts to help conserve vital remaining habitats and restore lost habitats.

Partners: EcoNRG, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, Houston Audubon Society, Meadows Foundation, Reliant Energy, Shell Marine - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Texas Commission of Environmental Quality - Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The North Deer Island Shoreline Restoration Project was awarded the 2008 First Place Gulf Guardian for Project Teams from the EPA/Gulf of Mexico Program.

State Wildlife Grants



A view looking toward the river on the newest Wildlife Management Area in Oklahoma, Cimarron Bluff WMA. Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Adds Newest WMA thanks to Legacy Permits and State Wildlife Grant Program. Oklahoma's sportsmen will soon have access to an all new wildlife management area (WMA) in western Oklahoma thanks to funds from fishing and hunting legacy permit sales and the State Wildlife Grants Program. The new tract, to be known as Cimarron Bluff WMA, is located about 15 miles east of Buffalo and comprises 3,402 acres of prime mixed grass prairie habitat adjoining the Cimarron River in eastern Harper County. Photo by Larry Wiemers, OK Dept. of Wildlife Conservation.

The State Wildlife Grants program is a federal cost-share program that provides funding to state wildlife agencies like the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in order to develop more effective conservation programs for rare and declining species. A number of wildlife species, including some identified in Oklahoma's Wildlife Action Plan as a species of greatest conservation need will directly benefit from the habitat on Cimarron Bluff WMA.

Unique species for which the purchased land can provide habitat are, among others, the Texas horned lizard, lesser prairie chicken, western massasauga snake, long-nosed snake, Bell's vireo, long-billed curlew, loggerhead shrike and western big-eared bat. The property adjoins the Cimarron River, providing potential habitat for an additional variety of species such as the Arkansas River shiner, Arkansas darter, interior least tern and whooping crane. In all, over 50 species of special management concern in Oklahoma will benefit from habitat management activities at Cimarron Bluff. Cimarron Bluff consists mostly of gently rolling hills covered with native mixed grass prairie. Grasses like bluestem, Indian grass and sideoats grama along with sand plum, sand sagebrush and sumac cover the area, as well as a range of forbs. These upland sites provide habitat for a number of traditional game species such as deer, turkey, quail and furbearers. This area also has several ponds totaling near 30 acres, including one 12.5-acre pond that offers excellent fishing opportunity.

Region 2

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Highlights from Region 3

Wildlife Restoration

Bottomland Forest Restoration in Illinois

by *Kathy Andrews*

One of the largest, and longest running Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act projects in Illinois is the Statewide Public Lands Wildlife Habitat Development Project, initiated in 1962 and known commonly as W-76-D. The goals of the project are to create wildlife habitat on public lands, provide facility access and recreation opportunities, and establish wildlife management demonstration areas for Illinois citizens.

Paul Willms, project manager for the Illinois DNR's Division of Wildlife Resources, has been involved with the project for 34 years and coordinates development of the on-going 6-year plans for each of the 83 DNR sites currently participating in the project. The Service's Region 3 presented an award to Mr. Willms in March 2008 honoring him for his long term excellence in development, leadership and administration of the W-76-D project.

"The number of people contributing to the development and implementation of each plan is astounding," Willms said. "From within DNR you have the land manager and the district wildlife biologist, forester and heritage biologist, and then you factor in the role of constituent groups and other land management agencies. The knowledge and enthusiasm these folks have really shows in the amount of on-the-ground work they are able to accomplish each year."

The Cache River State Natural Area contains 1,000-year-old bald cypress trees, Illinois' largest natural area and largest dedicated nature preserve—and 18 parking lots constructed through the project that are designed to provide hunter access to more than 11,800 acres of prime squirrel, deer and duck habitat. For the majority of the year, these lots provide the hiker, birder, photographer and nature enthusiast access to incredible sights and sounds of the river system.

"Management and restoration of the Cache River is a work in progress involving DNR, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited, with support from NRCS, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Friends of the Cache River, Citizens Committee to Save the Cache River and other local constituency groups," said Jim Waycuilis, site superintendent of the 14,314-acre site spanning Johnson and Pulaski counties in southern Illinois.

At monthly meetings, partners discuss how to maximize efforts and leverage funds for restoration of the unique bottomland forest and river ecosystems.

"One of the largest accomplishments within the boundaries of the Cache River project is the reforestation of lands that were cleared and drained throughout much of the last two centuries," said Mark Guetersloh, district heritage biologist with Illinois DNR. "Since 1991, more than 601,000 seedlings have been planted on 1,560 acres, and almost 2,000 acres of wetlands restored on public and private lands within the watershed, due in large part to support from the State's Conservation 2000 program and the W-76-D project."

The W-76-D projects implemented at the Cache River SNA also are an excellent example of how cooperative efforts — development of wetlands, removal of exotic species, trail development, planting of warm-season grasses — between biologists with different specialties can have profound benefits for both game and nongame species.

Shooting Ranges Improved in Indiana

A shortage of well-designed shooting ranges throughout Indiana causes access problems for recreational shooters and hunters. To meet the demand for recreational shooting opportunities, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources embarked on a program to improve, renovate and expand public shooting ranges statewide.

Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act hunter education funds are typically used for these projects. Three large shooting range renovations have been accomplished on Department of Natural Resources properties. The three major renovations had a total project cost of about 7.7 million dollars, including about 5.7 million dollars of hunter education grant funds.

The Kingsbury State Fish and Wildlife Area range had been closed for safety reasons. One grant was used to renovate and expand the range to 33 firing points and four clay target ranges. The Huntington Reservoir/Rousch Lake range was renovated and expanded from four firing points to 33 firing points. The Sgt. Joseph Proctor Shooting Range at Atterbury State Fish and Wildlife Area was expanded from 28 firing points to 72 firing points and four regulation trap and skeet fields were added.

Each of these ranges was designed to be safe, family friendly and appealing to the public. The annual increase in shooting opportunities is anticipated to exceed 40,000 from these three ranges. All the ranges are designed to be fully accessible and hunter education class friendly, with full time range officers and modest support facilities such as training rooms and restrooms. Safe, modern ranges provide a unique and valuable opportunity for participation in recreational shooting sports, enhance programs such as hunter education, recreational shooter and hunter recruitment and retention and, most importantly, provide a great way to introduce kids to outdoor sports.

Minnesota Archery in the Schools Program

The Minnesota DNR uses some of its annual apportionment of Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act hunter education funds for a statewide National Archery in the Schools (NASP) program. An estimated 85,000 students from 250 Minnesota school districts participate in the program which teaches target-style archery to students in grades 4 through 12 during regularly scheduled physical education classes. Craig Kiger, the DNR shooting sports program administrator, said "Every year this program is more exciting as more schools, children and families become involved." "It is a safe, supervised and structured program that introduces children to a sporting activity they can enjoy and participate in for their entire lives."

Nearly 600 youths from schools through Minnesota competed in the DNR's fourth annual State NASP Tournament in March, 2008. In 2005, the first year the program was offered, 65 student archers participated in the state tournament.

The top five male and female individuals in the elementary, middle school, and high school divisions of the State tournament received medals and earned the opportunity to participate in the NASP national tournament which was held in Louisville, KY, in May, 2008. A total of 152 archers from seven Minnesota schools made the trek to Kentucky. Minnesota had the third-largest number of students participating in the national tournament where 24 States were represented. Mitchel Monforton of Mound, MN, was the 2008 national champion male archer in the elementary division. Students from Minnesota schools finished fourth and eighteenth in the high school girls division.

Sport Fish Restoration

Shore Fishing Access Facilities Construction in Iowa

The shoreline angling access development and maintenance project is one of the first Dingell Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act projects initiated by the Iowa DNR after Congress passed the Wallop Breaux amendments to the Act. The project has a statewide objective to make Iowa waters easily accessible to anyone fishing from shore. At first, DNR efforts concentrated on constructing jetties and piers at State-owned lakes that received significant fishing pressure. Over the years the project expanded to encompass access improvement to trout streams, large rivers and urban fishing waters.

Access design is site specific and many design types help the DNR meet its objective. Since 1985, the DNR has constructed 80 jetties on 18 lakes, 16 piers on 16 waters, two pads on one trout stream, a seawall on the Mississippi River and one enclosed fishing house.



Blue Heron Fishing Pier, a partnership project with the City of West Des Moines on an urban lake in Iowa.

Partnerships have been formed with three cities for the construction of four fishing piers on urban waters. The cities were responsible for providing the local match, project design, and construction. City partnerships have allowed the DNR to meet the project's objective of easy access in urban areas.

Non-Federal funding to manage Iowa's fishery resource comes solely from license sales. Years of decline in license sales concern fisheries managers in how they will manage, sustain and enhance sport fish populations and fishing opportunities in the future. Iowa's population growth trend has been to its urban areas. Partnering with cities to improve shore access has encouraged close to home fishing opportunities. Making opportunities easily available in urban areas may be a way to attract new anglers and recapture lapsed anglers.

Sport Fish Restoration

Michigan Sturgeon Research

Since 2001, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University have used Dingell Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act funds for collaborative lake sturgeon research in Black Lake and the upper Black River. Research has focused on current population status, recruitment dynamics and bottlenecks to recruitment, and the evaluation of various supplementation strategies.

One of the unique aspects of the research program was the construction and use of a streamside rearing facility. This allowed researchers to conduct research on lake sturgeon in their natal waters.

Results of the research program at Black Lake have already been used to design restoration efforts in other waters around the Great Lakes. In addition, the results have documented that lake sturgeon natural recruitment in Black Lake continues to be very low and as a result the Michigan DNR, Michigan State University, and Tower Kleber Inc. (owner of the hydropower dams on the upper Black River) are constructing a permanent streamside rearing facility that will be used to supplement natural recruitment in the upper Black River to insure the continued health of this lake sturgeon population.

Aquatic Resources Education at the Indiana State Fair

Aquatic resources education, including an introduction to the sport of fishing, is an important component of the Indiana DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife use of Dingell Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act funds.

The DNR building on the Indiana State Fairgrounds has a rich education history. Since the 1920's, the DNR has used this building to educate and inform state residents of the value and utility of natural resources. Most of the approximately 700,000 annual fairgoers visit the DNR building.

In 2006, Indiana's aquatic education effort was expanded by the addition of a fishing pond at the DNR's State Fairgrounds building for use during the fair and at other selected times. The goals of the project are to teach children to fish at the fair and to expose the adults that accompany them to the fun associated with teaching children to fish.

The fishing pond was part of a larger DNR State Fair building renovation. A \$600,000 Sport Fish Restoration grant provided funds for the fishing pond, interactive educational components and modification of old aquariums into a living stream educational display. Mentors, usually volunteers from local fishing clubs, have proven to be an abundant resource for helping the kids to fish, making this program cost efficient and effective.

The program has multiple benefits. Many children get to catch their first fish, and hopefully get hooked on fishing in the process. The adults that accompany the children learn how easy it is to expose children to a lifelong sport and a good way to spend time outdoors. Countless fairgoers are treated to the opportunity to watch excited kids catching their first fish, an experience intended to encourage them to give fishing a try.

Aquatic Resources Education

Landowner Incentive Program

Missouri Experience

Since 2004, the Missouri Department of Conservation has received five Tier 1 Grants and two Tier 2 Grants totaling \$2.66 million through the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). Tier 1 grants were used to hire staff to proactively target specific landowners in areas known to harbor greater prairie chickens on the tall grass prairies and Ozark cavefish in highly sensitive karst areas. Tier 2 Grants were used for on-the-ground management. To date, for the Greater Prairie Chicken Project, these efforts have resulted in the removal of over 6 miles of hedgerows and 344 acres of scattered trees to reduce fragmentation of prairie landscapes that benefit grassland birds. In addition, wildlife-friendly grazing rotations were implemented on 1500 privately owned acres. For the Ozark Cavefish Project, contact with landowners resulted in the discovery of two new populations and over 12 management agreements with landowners to improve septic systems and clean out sinkholes leaking into the karst recharge areas, and fence out cattle, improve low water crossings, and restore stream riparian corridors to stop sedimentation of streams entering karst areas.

Region 3

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Highlights from Region 4

Wildlife Restoration

Begley WMA, KY

The Elk Restoration Program is an overwhelming success in Kentucky. Ten years ago, former Governor Paul Patton opened a door of a livestock trailer and released seven elk in eastern Kentucky. An additional 1,542 elk, approximately two-thirds of them from Utah, would follow over the next few years. Today, the herd numbers approximately 6,500 animals. On October 6, 2001, Kentucky's long dormant elk-hunting heritage returned. The restoration of elk to eastern Kentucky has provided sportsmen a unique hunting opportunity for each of the last six years, and participation and interest in elk watching continues to increase. More than 31,000 hunters from 48 States applied for one of the 350 elk permits made available for the 2007 elk hunt.



The Elk Restoration Program is an overwhelming success in Kentucky.

Hunter Education

Athens Archery Park, AL

The grand opening and dedication ceremony for Alabama's first community archery park took place in Athens, Alabama, on February 28, 2008. Access to archery ranges, although not as impaired as firearms ranges, is becoming increasingly more difficult. Lack of convenient locations to participate has been identified as a barrier that prevents some individuals from becoming involved in the shooting sports. The construction of the Athens' public archery range in Limestone County will result in increased public access in Alabama's 17th most populated county. This range should enhance efforts to initiate participation of Athens City and Limestone County Schools in Alabama's National Archery in the Schools Program. The new facility is equipped with four youth targets (5-20 yards) eight adult targets 15-50 yards) and a 12-foot elevated platform with 3-D and Olympic style targets. The range was developed through a partnership with the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, City of Athens, and the Archery Trade Association and funded in part with a Wildlife Restoration section 10 funds. The AL Department of Conservation and Natural Resources constructed the range, and the city will provide routine maintenance such as grass cutting and litter removal.



*Athens Archery Park, AL
Grand opening of Archery Park. Photo by Wayne Waltz*

Sport Fish Restoration

Maricao Fish Hatchery, Puerto Rico

Besides the routine operations and maintenance activities germane to a fish hatchery, the Maricao Fish Hatchery (MFH) is slowly evolving into an important Sport Fish research facility in Puerto Rico. Throughout the years, the MFH has been the only sport fish supplier supporting Puerto Rico's sport fisheries. The MFH stocks 24 water reservoirs ranging in size from 15 to 1,000 acres. So far, the fish production has been limited to a few species, mostly largemouth bass (LMB), by the lack of the necessary infrastructure and technology to experiment with other species. However, the recent construction of a nursery building added new dimensions and opportunities to experiment with the production of triploid LMB to address the species growth and longevity problems in the Puerto Rico water reservoirs. The nursery building has also enabled researchers to initiate development of reproduction protocols for native species such as the bigmouth sleeper.



Fish Hatchery entrance sign. Photo by Fernando Nunez-Garcia Federal Assistance

Aquatic Resource Education

Mississippi Aquatic Resources Education Program

The Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, a division of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, has been delegated to implement the agency's aquatic resources education program. The museum is the perfect venue for educating citizens about the State's natural resources with its aquariums, habitat exhibits, and nature trails. The museum houses several Native Sport Fish aquariums which were viewed by more than 148,151 visitors consisting of approximately 25 percent school children this past year. Public fish feedings are a huge attraction, drawing in more than 4,977 visitors, the majority of which are school children. The feedings have recently been enhanced by the addition of interactive equipment which allows the diver to interact with the public. In addition to the myriad of aquariums and exhibits, museum staff provides hands-on educational programs to teach youth about Mississippi's aquatic resources. This past year, the museum hosted seven camp sessions that reached 140 students. The camp experience includes topics such as fish habitat and adaptations. Another popular program "Got Fish" is in its seventh year and had over 300 participants. In "GOT FISH?," a panel of professional anglers provide sessions on various fish species such as bass, crappie, and catfish. The panel is moderated by the sports editor of the State's largest newspaper and participants ask questions and provide comments. This is the second year that "Something's Fishy" was held in conjunction with "GOT FISH?." In "Something Fishy," youth get a behind the scenes aquarium tour with demonstrations on fish diets and aquarium maintenance. The Katfishing Kids program, which is a partnership effort between the agency, WalMart, and the Mississippi Wildlife Federation continues to grow and has provided nearly 700 kids with a hands-on fishing experience as part of the program.

State Wildlife Grants

South Carolina Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Planning, Statewide SC

As part of the plan to recover and enhance gopher tortoise populations, SCDNR is re-stocking tortoises in test areas. Hatchlings from laboratory-hatched eggs from the Tillman Sand Ridge Heritage Preserve were released into pens with starter burrows during summer 2007. An additional six hatchlings from Tillman Sand Ridge HP were released into pens covered by an 8 ft x 8 ft wire mesh cage in autumn 2007. The intention of the cage is to prevent predation by coyotes, crows, or raccoons. To date, the hatchlings seem to be surviving under the cages. Additional cages are under construction and will be used for all future hatchling releases.



South Carolina Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Planning. Hatchling enclosure. Photo by Wayne Waltz, Federal Assistance.

Clean Vessel Act

Bahia Honda State Park, Monroe County, FL

Bahia Honda State Park is located on Big Pine Key in Monroe County. The Park is open 7 days a week and the self-serve pumpout is offered at no charge to the boater. On average, 20 boats use the pumpout each day. Bahia Honda installed an Epson 40gpm Peristaltic Stationary pumpout unit with 25 feet of hose with a built in timer which tracks the number of gallons pumped. This project was funded from FWS grant V-13. The Marina has over 1,000 feet of dock and is located only 1/2 mile from the navigation channel and 3 miles from the next closest pumpout. The project was completed May, 2007, and has pumped 2,657 gallons of sewage. The total cost of the grant was \$9,123.06 with 25 percent match provided by the installation of a peristaltic stationary pumpout unit. The Project was completed May 7, 2007.



Bahia Honda State Park is located on Big Pine Key in Monroe County. Photo by Brenda Leonard, CVA coordinator; Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Boating Infrastructure Grant

Lost Bridge Marina, Beaver Lake, Arkansas

Lost Bridge Marina was one of the state's first Boating Infrastructure Grant projects on beautiful Beaver Lake in northwestern Arkansas. Beaver Lake is a 30,000-acre U.S. Corps of Engineers controlled reservoir. Built by damming the White River, Beaver Lake is one of the largest recreation lakes in the State and home to some of the largest boats around. This project was completed by extending an existing marina dock and expanding it to accommodate larger boats. Eight new covered slips were added to the dock to service these vessels and meet a need that was not being addressed on this part of the lake. The new slips measure 30 feet long by 20 feet wide and there is an additional tie up at the end of the new dock for larger boats. The Federal share of this project was \$45,653.00 with the State matching that with \$15,217.00. The new facilities make it possible for the larger boats to moor and enjoy the many tourist and dining attractions in the area.



BIG Tier II project with transient boat slips/docks and piers.

*Lost Bridge Marina, Beaver Lake, Arkansas. Picture provided by Mr. Ian Hope
Federal Assistance Coordinator, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.*

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Highlights from Region 5

Wildlife Restoration



Since the Wildlife Restoration (WR) program became operational in 1938, State wildlife agencies in the Northeast have used the funds available to them for a variety of projects. Many of the early grants involved repopulating areas with then scarce species like white-tailed deer or studying the effects of “seed stock” refuges for game and furbearer species. Many States also began to use WR funds to collect information on the total legal harvest game species and to gather physical information from those animals. For example, Vermont grant 2-R was initiated in 1940 to “secure weights and measurements of deer taken during the open hunting season,” for the grand sum of \$555.59. These grants began to lay the foundation for information-based management of wildlife populations.

As species were successfully restored, the number of active grants for repopulation has dwindled. However, almost every State continues to use WR funds to tally legal harvests of game species and gather vast amounts of biological information such as age, weight, reproductive output, antler-beam diameter, and parasite load. This information is collected by professional biologists and armies of staff and volunteers. In some agencies, everyone from the director on down is called upon to work at a check station during deer season. States also use other tools to collect information on hunter harvests and effort including mail, telephone, and internet surveys, aerial surveys, and voluntary submission by hunters and trappers of animal parts such as teeth and wings that enable biologists to determine an animal’s age. All of this information is sorted, summarized, and analyzed by trained biologists to make management recommendations for the various species.

Given the success of the restoration efforts for white-tailed deer, black bear, and many other species, both furred and feathered, the amount of effort and dollars devoted to gathering this population scale data has increased. Just a glimpse of some of what Northeastern States have done in recent years is telling. In 2006, the last complete reporting year, biologists in Maryland estimated the age of 4,771 hunter-killed deer; West Virginia biologists took measurements of 1,704 black bears; Massachusetts staff collected information on 2,266 spring-harvested wild turkeys; Maine biologists examined 2,329 moose taken by hunters; and in Vermont, they continued the work which began in 1940 by weighing and taking measurements of 581 white-tailed deer. Of course, States also use many other types of data on wildlife and habitats to inform their management decisions but, for game species, information collected during the legal hunting and trapping seasons is the foundation. Thus, the management of these species is underpinned by data collected in the field with the cooperation of licensed hunters and trappers, fulfilling the user-pay/user-benefit cycle of success upon which the Wildlife Restoration program was founded.

Sport Fish Restoration

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has developed a number of scientifically-based fish population assessment programs to improve the management of sport fish species using Sport Fish Restoration funds. “Depletion sampling” is a technique commonly used on smaller streams using backpack shockers that collect fish in a stream and holds them alive for identification and data collection. In recent years, Inland Fisheries staff have developed a large river sampling technique utilizing a fleet of boat electrofishers to conduct depletion samples. A line of 10-14 boats works upstream slowly shocking and netting all species of fish and placing them in shore-based live wells for later identification, counts, lengths, weights, and other data. The sections of river sampled range from 0.5 to 0.75 miles. This sampling process is repeated, usually between 3 to 5 times, with the numbers of fish collected declining in each successive run (e.g., smallmouth bass greater than 6 inches, 220, 152, 80, 37). Based on the catch decline for a species, an estimate of the true population size can be made using statistics, yielding much more valuable information than would otherwise be obtained by one boat sampling (e.g., 40 smallmouth per hour netted). The population data can be expanded to the area sampled and examined in a variety of ways to assess trends in that population over time and also compare the data to other river populations, providing a solid basis for management decisions.

On the South Fork Shenandoah River, this large river survey has been instrumental in documenting population level effects of large-scale fish kills of smallmouth bass and other species that is under intense study. To improve their estimates, VADGIF biologists radio tag a small number of smallmouth bass and evaluate their efficiency based upon the capture rate of the radio tagged fish, which can be tracked and

verified as present in the study reach during the course of a sampling event. This sampling program, designed to obtain the best scientific information, has been viewed by VADFGIF as an important step forward in improving their large river fisheries management programs. The trained professional biologists of the VADGIF continually strive to improve the technology and techniques used to manage Virginia's fishery resources and rely on the Sport Fish Restoration Program as a critical source of funding for those efforts.



The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries staff prepares to start a sampling run on the South Fork Shenandoah River. In September of 2007, three study reaches were sampled over a three day period on this river using up to 12 boats.



One of several large tanks used to hold fish collected on each sampling run. Fish are sorted by species and processed by teams of biologists at multiple stations and then returned back to the river.



VADGIF biologists processing the catch from a study reach on the South Fork Shenandoah. Biologists identify the species, lengths and weights are taken, scales may be taken for aging, and other data as needed are recorded, producing volumes of high quality data for later analyses and interpretation by the biologists.

Aquatic Resource Education



Picture kids turning over rocks in a stream to key out who's living on the underside of the stones; casting a line into a small pond and catching their first sunfish; planting beach grass or saplings to help stabilize fragile shores; exploring the rich mud of a freshwater or tidal wetland, alive with small creatures to get to know; picking up a sea star from a shallow tide pool and feeling its tiny tube feet tickle their hands; discovering that the rivers that flow through their city offer fishing fun and green places to sit; caring for and studying just-hatched bass, yellow perch, shad or horseshoe crabs in a classroom aquarium till they are big enough to release in a nearby stream or saltwater cove; practicing canoeing skills at summer camp and exploring a pristine lake to the sound of calling loons; creating a schoolyard wetland as an outdoor classroom; using GIS maps of a local watershed to understand the links between land use practices and the health of rivers; sitting quietly on a salt marsh boardwalk and listening to the whisper of the wind in the grasses, the gurgling of sea water moving up a tidal gut and the steady clicking of foraging fiddler crabs.

From Maine to Maryland, States continue to use some of their Sport Fish Restoration dollars to fund aquatic resource education programs that re-connect people with nature. States train teachers on watershed ecology and the principles of resource management and conservation; work with dedicated volunteers to teach kids the basics of fish biology and the skills to enjoy freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing, fly fishing and even ice fishing; introduce teachers and youth group leaders to educational activities they can use with their students as they explore how a tidal salt marsh works; host family fishing events where parents and kids discover the delights of fishing together; develop interpretive and live fish exhibits at hatcheries, aquariums and education centers to help visitors and students discover the worlds of fishes, rivers, and oceans and how we work to manage and conserve them; and help teachers and students conduct field studies, discuss resource issues and understand the human dimension aspects of conservation. State educators design diverse programs for the many different audiences that each State needs to reach, from urban families and summer campers to classroom teachers and citizen scientists. As a result, people gain skills in fishing, science, and critical thinking, change attitudes about the outdoors and wildlife, and begin to become stewards of nature. Best of all, they are given the opportunity to reawaken their innate sense of wonder and let it enrich their lives.

Boating Infrastructure Grant

Baltimore City's Inner Harbor Marine Center

The City of Baltimore reports that over 13 million people visit the Baltimore Inner Harbor annually. Recent investments in new and expanded attractions have made the Inner Harbor a popular destination. However, the outdated Inner Harbor Marine Center was in need of replacement.

Thirty years ago, MD's DNR provided matching Waterway Improvement Fund Grants to Baltimore City to construct the 158 slip Inner Harbor Marina. The marina was built and designed for the average size vessel at the time including 3 slips for 50-foot boats, 2 for 48-foot boats, and the rest for 40-foot boats. This configuration does not meet the needs and demands of today's general boating public which includes an increasing number of larger boats.

Starting in 2005, the concept of the Baltimore Inner Harbor Marine Center Renovation project was carried out as a coordinated effort between the City, the Inner Harbor Marina concessionaires who lease the site, the State of Maryland, and the USFWS Boating Infrastructure Grant Program. A Tier II Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) request was submitted and awarded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, providing an essential \$1,080,577 in federal BIG funding to supplement the State of Maryland Waterway Improvement funds and private funds for the extensive renovations. The project began in November of 2006 and was completed in May of 2007 so as to minimally interrupt the marina's boating season.

The finished product is a source of pride for all involved and an example of successful collaboration between local, State, Federal and private entities for the benefit of the boating public. The total cost of the project was \$3,376,541.



Region 5

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Highlights from Region 6

Wildlife Restoration Program

Wildlife Habitat Monitoring in Utah

Funded by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The health and vigor of big game populations in the West are closely correlated to the quality and quantity of forage in key areas. Quality of big game winter range has long been recognized as critical to the well being of elk and mule deer populations. In the West, many factors have altered quality of rangeland including weed invasion, drought, fires, and livestock grazing, and now climate change looms as a major threat. The ability to detect changes in vegetation composition (range condition trend) is an important part of big game management.

Understanding the need to keep a watchful eye on winter range habitat, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) developed a project to carefully monitor quality of game range statewide. Although the project, Wildlife Habitat Monitoring/Range Trend Studies, is primarily funded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Program and through UDWR funds, several other State and Federal agencies also serve as cooperators. These include Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

The purpose of the UDWR project is to monitor, evaluate, and report range quality trends at designated key areas throughout the State, and inform UDWR biologists, public land managers, and private landowners of significant changes in plant community composition in those areas. Permanent study sites are established at key areas around the state and resurveyed every five years. Approximately one-fifth of the State's big game herd management units receive an evaluation of range condition each year. Although the majority of permanent study studies are located on deer and elk winter ranges, spring and summer ranges are evaluated if vegetation composition is the limiting factor. Project biologists mark and relocate study sites with GPS and use a state-of-the art program for data collection and analysis. A crew of seven to nine people collects vegetation and soil data along five 100 foot baseline transects and enters the data into field computers. During the five-year period ending in 2006, crews surveyed 627 sites around the state.



UDWR biologists, land management personnel from the USFS and BLM, and private landowners use the range trend database to evaluate the impact of land management programs on elk and mule deer habitat. Range trend data are used by wildlife biologists and other land managers for habitat improvement planning purposes, reviewing BLM and USFS grazing allotment management plans, and as one of several sources of information for revising deer and elk herd management plans. Results of the annual survey work are readily available to partners via report and the Division's Web site. Early detection of vegetation changes have allowed resource managers to make necessary adjustments before habitat damage was out of control. For example, during 2002-04 drought conditions caused the die off of several stands of Wyoming big sage brush. Data from the range trend studies allowed managers to determine which areas required habitat improvement.

Sport Fish Restoration

Whirling Disease "Resistant" Strains of Rainbow Trout Reproducing Naturally in Colorado

A Project Funded by Colorado Division of Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For the first time since whirling disease decimated most naturally reproducing rainbow trout populations throughout Colorado more than a decade ago, new strains of rainbows have reproduced naturally in the Gunnison River and in ponds located along the Frying Pan River near Basalt, Colorado.

Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) biologists are hopeful that the successful natural reproduction will lead to re-establishing wild, self-sustaining rainbow trout populations in Colorado where whirling disease has precluded wild rainbow trout recovery efforts. The fish, a cross of the Hofer rainbow trout and other rainbow strains that are used for stocking, appear to be resistant to whirling disease.

The Gunnison River is lower in elevation, water temperatures are warmer and it is renowned for producing large trout. Brown trout, which are resistant to whirling disease, thrive in the river. The ponds on the Frying Pan River also provide relatively warm water.



George Schisler, a CDOW aquatic research scientist, said the next best milestone will come in late 2008. "The fish need to make it to age one and beyond, so we'll see this fall," Schisler said. But judging from research conducted on the Hofer strain, scientists are confident that the fish will survive and continue to reproduce.

Whirling disease is caused by a microscopic parasite that passes through the fish's skin. The organism attacks the cartilage of young fish and distorts the spine. The affected fish move in a whirling motion, basically swimming in circles when excited or when trying to escape predation. This type of behavior greatly reduces the ability to survive in a wild setting. The disease was found in Colorado in the mid-1990s and it devastated most wild rainbow trout populations throughout the State.

During a whirling disease seminar in 2002 in Denver, a German scientist delivered a research report about a rainbow strain that was resistant to whirling disease. The Hofer rainbow trout was raised in a German hatchery. The CDOW moved quickly to determine if the fish could survive in Colorado. Early in 2003, CDOW researchers worked with the University of California at Davis to import the eggs and start a brood stock at the Fish Research Hatchery outside of Fort Collins. The fish were exposed to the disease and then dissected to see how many parasite spores had developed.

Schisler said researchers were stunned by what they saw. Spore counts in the Colorado River Rainbows exposed to the disease that the CDOW had used for stocking for years could reach 4,000,000 per fish. The highest count in the Hofers reached only about 3,000, and the spores did not affect the fish.

With funding from the Service's Sport Fish Restoration Program, CDOW aquatics staff then started crossing the Hofers with existing rainbow stock and conducting more tests. Not only were the new strains of fish resistant to the disease, they also grew faster than traditional stocker strains. Hofers grew to catchable size— about 10 inches — in about 14 months, four months faster than the other rainbow trout strains.

In 2004, fingerlings of the new cross strains were released into the Gunnison River. They were released into the Frying Pan River ponds in 2005, and also into the Colorado River in 2006.

Some catchable-size crosses were also stocked in two reservoirs near Berthoud in the spring of 2006. The fish continued to grow in the reservoir and anglers were successful in catching them.

Mark Jones, aquatic research leader for the DOW, said Colorado leads the Nation in the whirling disease war. "No other State has conducted more research into identifying real solutions to the whirling disease problem" Jones said. "We could tell this was a good thing from the start."

Based on the extensive research, the DOW hatcheries are expanding production of the various crosses. In 2008 more than 1 million sub-catchable and catchable fish of the Hofer crosses are planned to be stocked in lakes and rivers throughout Colorado.

Research, funded with Sport Fish Restoration dollars, to examine the resistance of the Hofer crosses to whirling disease and their ability to survive in the wild is ongoing.



State Wildlife Grants

Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership Exemplifies a New Paradigm in Cooperative Wildlife Conservation in Nebraska

A Project Funded by the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

With funding from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's State Wildlife Grant Program and many other sources, the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (Partnership) studies and protects endangered least terns, threatened piping plovers and other birds within the Platte River system, Nebraska, in a manner that minimizes conflicts with private industry, and educates and involves local communities in this effort.

The Partnership was founded in 1999 to prevent and resolve conflicts between nesting birds and sand and gravel mining industry operations. Jeanine Lackey and Ron Johnson from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, and John Dinan of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission initiated the program. The approach of the Partnership is to work with all interested parties to find sensible, proactive solutions to protecting terns, plovers, and other components of the Platte River ecosystem, while ensuring that business, industry, and private interests continue to operate.

The Partnership is a proactive, cooperative effort between the Nebraska Environmental Trust, University of Nebraska, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Sand and Gravel, Mallard Sand and Gravel, Arps Gravel and Concrete, Overland Sand and Gravel, Lyman-Richey Corporation, Harwest Industrial Minerals Corporation, Legacy Resources, Preferred Rocks of Genoa, Girl Scouts - Great Plains Council, Nebraska Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund, Lower Platte South Natural Resource District, and Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District.

Partnership activities include protecting colonies from predation and human disturbance using electric fences, exclosure cages, and signage; creating strong working relationships between sand and gravel mining companies; homeowners' associations, local governments, conservation organizations, and the public; preventing and mitigating conflicts between nesting birds and business interests; and increasing awareness and appreciation of conservation issues by participating in events that educate the public, business, and government.

Partnership program coordinator Mary Bomberger Brown said it best, "The partnership has demonstrated that by working cooperatively with commercial interests, local communities and government agencies, effective conservation and management measures can be implemented"



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Highlights from Region 7

“Better Tools for Counting Bears” by Elizabeth Manning, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Biologists employ two main survey tools to estimate bear populations. The most common method, known as “mark-recapture,” involves capturing animals such as bears, “marking” them with radio collars and then noting how many of those bears are recaptured at a later date. Mark-recapture is a proven method for estimating bear populations within small to moderately-sized areas, but is more costly and may not be logistically feasible for larger areas.

Earl Becker, an Alaska Department of Fish and Game research supervisor, and his collaborator, Pham Quang, a professor emeritus at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, have chosen the other tool, known as a “line transect survey,” to estimate the number of bears in Game Management Unit 16B. Located south and east of the Alaska Range, this unit contains varied transitional terrain that ranges from coastal, salmon-rich areas to Interior boreal forest.

Biologists have some idea already of the number of bears that live in nearby coastal and Interior regions but the survey will provide a first reliable bear estimate for this intensive management area with an active wolf control program. Biologists believe bear predation may play a significant role in moose survival in 16B and believe the area has a more black bears than brown bears. The survey will tell biologists the ratio of brown bears to black bears. Also, if the Alaska Board of Game ever decides to consider bear control for the region, biologists would first need to know how many bears live in the area.

The line-transect method is particularly suited to Unit 16B because of the variety of the terrain and the large survey area. Line transects, relying on aerial surveys, can be tricky to pull off. Biologists need to time the aerial surveys optimally so they are searching for bears after hibernation has ended but before vegetation grows so it obscures bears. Becker anticipates hiring five airplanes for seven days to complete a total of 800 to 1,000 transects, with each transect about 30 kilometers long. Each plane carries two spotters —the pilot and a biologist who sits behind the pilot.

Transect locations are randomly chosen and a global positioning system on board the airplane documents the precise route the airplane flies. Some transects are straight lines, but others are curved to match the topography. No surveys will be conducted above the 4,500-foot level since few bears are found at such high altitudes. The total area surveyed will cover 21,035 square kilometers of which 17,199 square kilometers are bear habitat below 4500 feet in elevation.

Once the surveys are flown, Becker begins the challenging work of figuring out mathematical corrections to create a “sightability model” that accounts for bears that were undoubtedly there when the survey was flown but were missed by surveyors. He also must determine the maximum effective survey distance at which surveyors were spotting bears in order to determine the overall area surveyed. That number is also needed as a variable in the sightability model.

Becker said he and Quang have been working to build and refine the method for use on bear populations for a decade and are considered pioneers of the survey tool in Alaska. Comparisons between mark-recapture and line-transect results have shown close agreement between the two methods — but line transect work is far cheaper. With this method we can get a population estimate for both brown and black bears for less than the cost of estimating one bear population using mark-recapture in a small area.



Sport Fish Restoration

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport Fish Restoration "Stock Assessment and Management of the Stikine River Chinook" Project

In the mid-1970s, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game implemented a fisheries management program to rebuild Southeast Alaska and transboundary (shared with Canada) river Chinook salmon stocks when it became apparent that many populations were depressed relative to historic levels. As a component of this program, directed fisheries on Stikine River Chinook salmon were eliminated or restricted.

In 1985, a comprehensive coastwide rebuilding program was initiated under the auspices of the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty. The treaty allowed for increased commercial and sport fishing harvests of specific wild runs if fishery restrictions were successful in rebuilding stocks to historic levels, scientifically-based escapement goals were established, and management systems were in place to ensure escapement goals were reached.

Since 1995, a rigorous Stikine River Chinook salmon stock assessment program, using Sport Fish Restoration funds, has been conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Tahltan First Nation to estimate the abundance and age structure of the escapement. Drift gillnets are used to catch adult Chinook salmon in the lower Stikine River below the U.S./Canada border. Fish are tagged with spaghetti tags, measured, classified by sex, and sampled for scales. Fish harvested in Canadian inriver fisheries or captured at or near their spawning grounds are examined for the presence or absence of tags. The percentage of fish with tags is then used to estimate the number of Chinook salmon that enter the river. The information collected by this program has also been used to establish escapement goals and develop models to forecast run strength.

Preseason and inseason forecasts and large escapements in recent years enabled the U.S. to negotiate a 2005 harvest sharing agreement with Canada that opened areas near the mouth of the Stikine River to sport fishing that had been closed since 1978. In addition, bag limits were increased, the use of two rods per angler was allowed, and directed commercial fisheries for Stikine River Chinook salmon were held in District 8 for the first time in 30 years.

In 2006, the American Fisheries Society recognized the achievements of the Stikine Chinook salmon stock assessment program by presenting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game the Outstanding Sport Fish Restoration Project of the Year award in the Research and Surveys category.



Setting a drift gillnet.



Tagging and taking a scale sample from a Chinook salmon. Note the spaghetti tag inserted near the trailing edge of the dorsal fin.

State Wildlife Grants

“Participate in Murrelet Watch” by Kristen Romanoff from an Alaska Department of Fish and Game - *Fish & Wildlife News* online at <http://www.wildlifenews.alaska.gov>

Marbled murrelets are considered to be a rare bird throughout much of its range. But in Southeast Alaska, they are the most abundant seabird on the water. Considered the epicenter for marbled murrelets, Southeast Alaska’s population of marbled murrelets is shrinking. In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey reports a 71% decline since the early 1990’s.

For the past four years, Alaska Department of Fish and Game non-game biologist, Matt Kirchhoff has been researching murrelets to better understand their distribution and abundance and how their populations may be regionally changing. He’s also been evaluating survey methods to determine the most effective means for long-term monitoring of marbled murrelets in Southeast Alaska including at-sea surveys, radar counts, audio-visual counts and flyway counts.

In a region with 14,000 miles of shoreline and thousands of bays and inlets, Southeast Alaska poses interesting challenges for biologists trying to get a handle on the region’s ‘signature seabird’. It would be virtually impossible to survey the entire region. Instead, a number of key survey sites have been established where volunteers and biologists are able to monitor these birds over consecutive years. It is the time and energy of valuable volunteers that make this effort both viable and effective.

Murrelet Watch, a citizen science monitoring program, is gearing up for its second season with many volunteers returning this year to lend a hand. The program continues to seek additional volunteers to expand survey efforts this field season. The program provides an opportunity for private citizens to assist biologists in conducting flyway counts from survey locations along shorelines in Ketchikan, Sitka, and Juneau.

While most seabirds nest in dense island colonies, the marbled murrelet is a solitary, secretive nester, preferring the moss-laden boughs of old-growth trees. The birds may travel miles from nesting areas to the sea, where they forage on schooling fish such as herring, capelin, and sand lance. Once the chick hatches, parents take turns flying back and forth between foraging areas and the nest delivering food to a single nestling. It is during this period when both adults are taking turns bringing fish back to the chick that is the ideal time for conducting flyway counts. These birds represent the adult breeding population. In an effort to capture this peak period, this year’s program will concentrate all community based flyway counts during a 10-day period in mid-July.

Participating volunteers are up and out of the house before most people are even awake. Working in pairs, volunteers take turns in front of spotting scopes, observing and counting murrelets as the birds fly by the scope en route to foraging or nesting areas. Other volunteer pairs work an evening shift, enjoying the day’s end while spotting murrelets. During peak periods, spotters may see dozens to hundreds of birds flying by during their surveys.

Interested individuals need not be expert birders. We will provide all of the training and tools that you’ll need to be a part of this year’s Murrelet Watch team. Information gathered is vital to conserving marbled murrelets and the habitats they depend upon. If you’re interesting in participating in this year’s flyway counts, please contact Kristen Romanoff at 907-465-4292 or e-mail at Kristen.romanoff@alaska.gov. To learn more about these fascinating seabirds, please call or drop by your local ADF&G area office to receive a copy of “Marbled Murrelets in Southeast Alaska,” a free ADF&G full color 20-page booklet.

Kristen Romanoff is an educator with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation. She is based in Douglas.



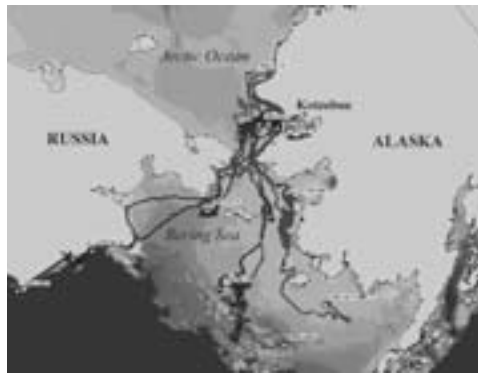
A marbled murrelet.

Tribal Wildlife Restoration

Kotzebue Tribal Wildlife Grant "Habitat use, seasonal movements and stock structure of bearded seals in Kotzebue Sound, Alaska" project

In 2004, the Native Village of Kotzebue, Alaska, received a Tribal Wildlife Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect information about the distribution, movements, population status, and natural history of bearded seals found in Kotzebue Sound and to see if these bearded seals belong to the same stock as those hunted elsewhere in Alaska (Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas), as well as in Russia. Bearded seals are the most important marine mammal subsistence species for hunters in Kotzebue Sound and are harvested extensively in spring on the pack ice and fall in open water and as freeze-up approaches. The seals are hunted for subsistence in many communities throughout Alaska and a variety of industrial activities also occur in regions where bearded seals are found — for example Red Dog Mine shipping and port site docking north of Kotzebue, and Bering Sea crab fisheries in likely seal wintering areas. Bearded seals depend on sea ice for hauling out and as substrate for rearing their pups. Their sea ice habitat is likely to be affected by climatic warming trends and diminishing sea ice cover in the Alaskan Arctic.

This project was designed as a cooperative effort between biologists and local Kotzebue-area hunters, and combined local knowledge about the distribution and habits of bearded seals with the knowledge of biologists about how to tag seals and to analyze data recorded by the tags. Young of the year bearded seals were captured and fitted with satellite tags to record movement, diving and hauling out behavior. Information provided by satellite tags helps to identify important bearded seal habitat and facilitate the development of appropriate guidelines to minimize impacts of human activities on the seals.



Movements of 11 female tagged Bearded Seals 2004 to 2006.

Tagged juvenile Bearded Seal.

Region 7

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Highlights from Region 8

Aquatic Resource Education

Sport Fish Restoration Dollars at Work

The Fishing in the City program is funded entirely through the Sportfish Restoration Program. These dollars pay for the basic infrastructure of the programs including DFG staff to coordinate events, fish for stocking, publications and equipment. Local communities provide more than \$750,000 in in-kind donations of time, materials and fish to help the programs grow.

The CAEP program is partially funded through SFR, These dollars pay for staff time to coordinate programs, train teachers and provide education materials. Local fly-fishing clubs and school contribute a significant portion of money and time too match the Federal dollars.

For more information, go to www.classroomaquarium.org or www.fishinginthecity.org.

Connecting Kids With The Natural Resource -In Our Urban Areas.

*Ethan Rotman, Fishing in the City Coordinator; SF Bay Area Classroom Aquarium Education Program Coordinator; SF Bay Area
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Connecting children and their families with the out of doors: this is the goal of two of Fish and Games premier programs — Fishing in the City and the Classroom Aquarium Education Program (CAEP). Both of these programs work to bring people into direct connect with the natural world with the goal of creating a class of people that will appreciate, care for, and protect our natural resources.

Many of us grew up running the field, hills, and open lots that surrounded our homes and neighborhoods. We explored nature, spent hours outside engaged in a type of play that centered around open and untamed spaces. Children today have far less opportunity to for this type of play. Direct exposure to the out-of-doors is essential in creating future stewards of the environment.

Classroom Aquarium Education Program

Students witness first-hand the magic of nature watching fish eggs develop and hatch in classroom aquariums.

Classes engage in an extended study of local watersheds, fish life-cycles, and what fish need to survive before they set up a specially designed aquarium in their classroom. Fertilized eggs are placed in the tank and the students spend the next eight weeks watching the eyed-egg transform to hatching, alevin and then to a fry. These fish are released into a carefully selected body of water near the students' school.

Through a classroom experience of hatching fish eggs and coordinated activities, students experience first-hand the value of aquatic environments, the balance that must be met to maintain and preserve California's fisheries and aquatic habitats, and how their personal actions affect these valuable resources.

The Classroom Aquarium Education Project is offered Statewide in partnership with regionally-based community organizations. While the program has several names around the State, the essential learning elements and student experiences are similar. The prerequisite training workshops are held at locations throughout the State. Completion of a training workshop is required to receive eggs. Teacher training workshops are offered at least once a year in each region.

Fishing in the City

Fishing in the City works to improve fishing in urban areas, teach people how to fish and help individuals understand how their actions affect the quality of water in their local waterways. The focus is on creating a sustainable community based program that provides repeatable experiences to youth and their families.

Most programs teach beginner level skills although advanced angling, fly-fishing, pier and ocean fishing are offered on a limit basis. Clinics focus on teaching skills so participants can return to fish on their own. Each program includes a strong

conservation message focusing on how individuals can make a difference in maintaining quality habitat.

Rainbow trout and catfish are stocked in many urban lakes prior to clinics to increase the chance of catching a fish by participants. Lakes are also stocked at regular intervals to help improve fishing in urban areas for all lake users. The Department has a special allotment of funds which are used to stock urban lakes for this program. Many communities establish equipment loan programs for individuals and organizations.

Teaming with Others

The strength of these programs lie within the communities served. Each individual program is custom designed by the community for the community. DFG provides fish, scientific and educational consultation and guidance while the other community partners provide other assistance as they are able. Scores of service clubs, fly fishing clubs, environmental organizations, youth groups, businesses, local governments, and individual contribute to the success of Fishing in the City and CAEP.

Volunteer Support Adds Up

Volunteers provide tens of thousands volunteer hours each year. Volunteers provide a wider variety of services from teaching clinics, setting up aquariums, performing habitat restoration, repairing equipment, to conducting marking programs and designing publications. Look for volunteer opportunities in your area.

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